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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA
UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Meeting on Selected Branches of the
Food Processing Industry in the Middle East

Beirut, 3 - 8 March 1975

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Processing of Fruits and Vegetables

Taking into account that:

1. The Arab countries' target, in this sector, is to maximize the use of available resources, eliminating unnecessary imports and maximising exports;

2. Most of the existing plants are not organized on modern agro-industrial lines;

3. Existing process plants are not working to capacity;

4. Further large process plants have been planned;

5. There is an overall shortage of raw material;

6. Regional production is often of unsuitable varieties and the tonnage out-turn per hectare is very low;

7. There is little organized agricultural production under contract to guarantee:

   A. Supplies of consistent quality produce to the process plant throughout the production period

   B. A guaranteed remunerative price to the producer backed by regular agronomical assistance and advice

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C. Prices and supplies of raw materials are, under the present system, dependent on the demand in local fresh markets.

8. There is a lack of co-ordination between producers and the industrial sector;

9. Lack of co-operation leads to heavy losses through waste and handling;

10. In consequence the cost of raw material is high and the processed product can be both sub standard and costly;

11. High cost and irregular supply of packaging material;

12. Inadequate planning of factories and lack of proper implementation contributes to low productivity;

13. Marketing and distribution techniques are inadequate;

14. Storage of skilled personnel at all levels and lack of adequate training facilities:

IT WAS GENERALLY AGREED THAT:

An integrated approach should be recommended in order to further develop the sector on a modern basis and taking into consideration the countries' and regional interests. Therefore, the following is recommended:

1. PLANNING. Co-ordinated planning at all levels and in all contexts should be followed to take full advantage of latest technological developments. Careful planning at the outset will ensure maximum efficiency and avoid future mistakes which can be very costly.

2. MARKETING. Up-dated market research, utilizing existing studies should be conducted into the Arab and world wide markets for various types of produce.

3. AGRONOMICAL research in prospective areas must be carried out to identify the most promising regions, the right varieties with the highest possible yield, and most suitable for processing. Adequate attention must be paid to soil analysis, local environmental conditions, irrigation, the use of desalinated water, use of fertilizers and pest control. Extension of the season of production is essential.

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4. PACKAGING. Research must be effected into packaging with special emphasis on the maximum usage of local materials and introduction of plastics, foils and other forms of packing. Package manufacturing plants should co-ordinate supplies of packages to all industries. Requirements of individual packages will be fully investigated with reference to e.g. lacquer, canning, closures etc. A feasibility study for a central plant to produce empty containers for the region should be undertaken. The dimensions of packages should be reduced to a minimum to effect economies both of production and storage.

5. STORAGE. Research must be made into modern storage methods for dry, perishable and semi processed products to avoid wastage, deterioration and unnecessary handling.

6. TRANSPORT. An efficient and economic transport network must be created to ensure prompt delivery of raw materials collected from producers and delivery of finished products to buyers.

7. TRAINING. Training of adequate personnel at all levels, with availability of extension officers is vital.

8. NEW PRODUCTS AND PROCESSES. Investigation should be undertaken in order to promote the following developments in the region;

Deep freezing, Dehydration, Instant foods, High concentration, Convenience foods, Baby foods etc.

9. INSTITUTIONS. In order to assist the Arab countries in planning and implementing programs for expansion, reorganization and modernization of the fruit and vegetable processing industry, an institutional framework should be organized making use of existing institutions and, where necessary, creating new bodies. Need for the following institutions was specifically indicated:

1. Packaging Institute. 2. Producers Union. 3. Training Institute.
4. Standards Institute. 5. Marketing Board.

Government backing for industrial projects was also suggested and it was agreed that Institutions should have the full support of International Organisations such as ECAL, UNIDO, FAO, Arab Standards and Measurements, Arab Organization for Agricultural Development and Arab Labour Organization.